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Kingdom of God. "The raising up of the tabernacle of David commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church by the Apostles; and the possession of Edom and all the other nations upon whom the Lord reveals his name, took its rise in the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven set up by Christ." With this agree the words of the Apostle James (Acts xv., 13-17).

STUDIES IN ARCHÆOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

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IX.

THE LITERATURE OF PAGANISM.

As the literature of ancient pagan faiths becomes more accessible, the study of those historic and pre-historic religions which enter so invariably into all archæological inquiry is found to be greatly facilitated. By such literature is not meant those writings so long familiar to all scholars, and by just pre-eminence distinguished by the noble word "classic," nor any of those productions more recently become in a measure familiar, belonging to periods in oriental history more or less remote, which, like the great literary monuments of Rome and Greece, are the literature of paganism rather in the sense that their authors were pagans, than in any more strict sense. The allusion is to that which is the literature of paganism in the same sense that the Old Testament may be termed, though not in strict propriety, the literature of Judaism, and the New Testament the literature of Christianity.

If we would have any person rightly understand Christianity, we refer him to the Christian Scriptures. As no treatise upon the Christian faith, no work, however elaborate or trusted, upon systematic theology, much less any writing in which Christian ideas are simply introduced as incidental to the main topic, would answer the purpose of an authoritative and final presentation of Christianity as distinguished from all other religions; so must we, if we would study any pagan faith in a way to estimate it by what it really is, go beyond all pagan literature that is *mere* literature, beyond even the philosophy of paganism, so far as it is speculative and unauthoritative, beyond all those incidental sources of information supplied in traditions, in rituals, in pictured walls of temples and tombs, or in any comparative study of the mythologies of pagan faiths, and find, if possible, that

which in these religions answers to that *revelation* upon which all Christian teaching is founded. Not that such writings, when made accessible, are to be regarded as always, to the people by whom they were revered as "sacred," what the Bible is to the Christian; but because in them we have that highest and most authentic expression of the religion itself which, in spite of the endless confusions incident to idolatrous ideas and rituals, will enable us in some degree to see it as it is.

It is but recently that any, save those who are experts in certain lines of philological research, have been able to have access to what may, in the strict sense just explained, be called the sacred books of the great historical religions of paganism. The translations of these books, for which students of comparative religion owe such a debt of gratitude to Prof. Max Mueller and his associates, have made it possible for others than philological experts to read them, and to understand them, so far as in the nature of things that is possible. Even these practiced scholars have no doubt found the reproduction of these writings in a language and in idioms so greatly unlike the original ones as this in which they now give them to us, a work of exceeding difficulty. While it is true that some of these languages belong to the same great family of speech as our own, the formidable lapse of time since they were already dead tongues, the changes due to lingual development, to an utterly different civilization, to ideas, customs, ways of living so wholly diverse as are those of the far East and the far West—these and other causes make translations from these languages into our own embarrassing and difficult, and even after the translation is made, leave wide gulfs of obscurity which it is almost impossible in many instances to span. With all these drawbacks, however, the translations now for some time coming to us from over the sea are of immeasurable advantage to us. We can read for ourselves in these old pagan Bibles, and are thus not only relieved of the necessity of trusting wholly to the reports of others, but may put ourselves in direct contact with these often strange, yet always suggestive utterances of ancient faith and thought.

ORIENTAL PREDOMINANCE.

Notice may be taken here of a fact to which Prof. Max Mueller calls attention in his Introduction to the translations of Sacred Books of the East made partly by himself, partly by others acting in association with him. This fact is that the literature of paganism, to which we are now attending, is so almost exclusively oriental. "Neither Greeks nor Romans," he says, "nor Germans, nor Celts, nor Slaves,

have left us anything that deserves the name of Sacred Books. The Homeric Poems are national epics, like the Ramayana and the Niebelungen Lied, and the Homeric Hymns have never received that general recognition or sanction which alone can impart to the poetical effusions of personal piety the sacred or canonical character which is the distinguishing feature of the Vedic Hymns. The sacred literature of the early inhabitants of Italy seems to have been of a liturgical rather than of a purely religious kind, and whatever the Celts, the Germans, the Slaves may have possessed of sacred traditions about their gods and heroes, having been handed down by oral tradition chiefly, has perished beyond all hope of recovery." Possibly the kind of distinction implied in the phrase "sacred books," might at first sight seem to belong to the Elder Edda of the Scandinavian literature. Yet this work, in its present form, bears no comparison, in point of antiquity, with the sacred books of the East, having been written, as appears, about the year 1300 of our era; while in its substance it is, so far as religious, simply a collection of mythological traditions, these being intermixed with heroic ones. Dr. Horn, of Denmark, speaks of one of the poems which might almost be classed with those writings to which the term "sacred" is applied—"The Prophecy of Vala." He describes it as "a series of majestic, grand and poetic pictures of the cardinal features of the Norse mythology, beginning with the creation and ending with the destruction and regeneration of the world." It survives, however, only in fragments, and more resembles, one would think, the "Theogony," or the "Works and Days," of Hesiod, than a book making claim to superhuman origin, or one prescribing for a people the substance of its faith or the ritual of its worship.

It remains strictly true that no sacred books, no writings similar in their nature or in their claim to the Zend-avesta of the Parsi, the Upanishads of the Brahman, the Dhammapada of the Buddhist, the Koran of the Mohammedan, or the Bible of the Christian, has ever originated among any Western people. One might doubt if it ever would be likely to do so. There would seem to be a fitness, almost amounting to a necessity, in the conditions, in this respect, under which our own sacred books, for example, had their origin. Such raptures of prophetic inspiration as we see in the old Hebrew prophets are perfectly in keeping with peculiarities of the oriental mind, with the fervid temperament, the ecstatic impulse, the capacity for intense religious abstraction so abounding in the East, but comparatively so feeble, often so almost wholly lacking in the West. If we set ourselves back into Old Testament times and amidst Old Testament men or their surroundings, we can see how all that is related of direct

intercourse with God, of supernatural illumination, of miracle and prophecy, is in harmony with the attending conditions. In the New Testament period, Western influences, it is true, have mingled themselves with the characteristically Eastern ones, as an effect of Greek culture and Roman rule, creating thus a new set of conditions, in some sense strictly in harmony with the more advanced nature of New Testament revelation, and the more direct appeal to reason as well as to faith. Yet the New Testament, also, is an Eastern book, and Judea is that land in all the world, and the Hebrew nation that people, in which and among whom the Christ would most fittingly appear, such miracles as his be wrought, and such a religion as his set forth upon its mission.

Now, it is to the Old Testament period, and to conditions similar to those of the Hebrew Sacred Books, that most of these other sacred books are to be assigned. I might say *all*, for even the Koran, of Mohammed, although written only in the seventh century of our own era, originated with a people who might be said to have scarcely changed in character and habits since the time of their ancestor Ishmael, while Mohammed, and his Koran, are, in all their characteristics, of the old and changeless East, not at all of the new, mobile, and progressive West. It is well to keep all this in mind in studying the pagan and Mohammedan Scriptures. We can account for them in this way as in no other; we can appreciate them thus for what they are;—so far as is possible with writings so completely outside of all our own conceptions of things and our own habits of thought, we can in this way, and in this way alone, comprehend them.

BOOKS RECOGNIZED AS "SACRED."

A point of inquiry very naturally offers itself here,—What are the books to which this phrase "Sacred Books of the East"—or as we may also term them, pagan Bibles—is thus applied? The list which Prof. Max Mueller gives of "great and original religions which profess to be founded on sacred books," leaving out Judaism and Christianity, does not seem to be quite complete. The list he gives is as follows: The Religion of the Brahmans, The Religion of the followers of Buddha, The Religion of the followers of Zarathustra (Zoroaster), The Religion of the followers of Khung-fu-tze (Confucius), The Religion of the followers of Lao-tze (also Chinese), and The Religion of the followers of Mohammed. (In these studies the last named is not included, save for purposes of illustration.) We observe that Mueller makes no mention of the Ancient Egyptians. Perhaps he would not regard their religion as strictly belonging to the cate-

gory of those "founded on sacred books," or authenticated by them. Another writer, however, Renouf, with whom the study of Egyptian antiquities has been long a specialty, as it never was with Max Mueller, appears to be to some extent of a different opinion. One of the chapters of his work "*The Religion of Ancient Egypt*," he entitles "The Religious Books of Egypt," and he proceeds, then, to describe them at length, their antiquity, even in the form in which we now have them, some of them being more than four thousand years old, the material used in producing them, and the manner in which they have been preserved, so as to make them unique in the world's literature, whether of ancient or of modern times. "The Egyptian manuscripts [or papyri] which we now possess," he says, "have been preserved by being kept from the air and damp in a perfectly dry climate, hermetically sealed in earthen or wooden vessels or under mummy coverings, sometimes at a depth of ninety feet within the living rock, and still further protected by a thick covering of the dry and pure sand of the desert." Of course, the circumstances under which these manuscripts are thus found—buried in tombs with the dead—suggests something unique in Egyptian ideas as to their sacred books, and in the uses to which they applied them. Books, everywhere else in the world, are and have been for the living, not for the dead. We look for them in libraries, not in tombs. The ground of the strange exception now before us is perhaps not quite clear. One writer, Kenrick, says that these papyri, buried thus with the dead, were passports to the better life of the future. They are mostly made up of prayers, put into the mouth of the deceased person, and supposed to be addressed by him to the god in whose hand his destiny in the other life lies. But there are also directions for the funeral, and prayers are included which have been recited at the burial. There are vignette pictures, also, in which the priest is often exhibited engaged in the funeral rites; all involving more or less of the religious ideas and beliefs of this strange people. It is the collection of the very considerable number of papyri of this sort which constitutes what is called "The Book of the Dead"—the Bible of the Ancient Egyptians, if any book can deserve to be so named. It is perhaps true that we cannot term this a Sacred Book quite in the sense in which that phrase is applied to the Koran, or to our own Bible; nor can we say, properly, that upon this Book of the Dead, or any other ancient Egyptian book or collection of such, their religion was "founded," as upon something revealed, and therefore endowed with peculiar authority. Yet this appears to be true, that more is learned of peculiarities of the ancient Egyptian religion from this collection of original manuscripts

than from any other source. These manuscripts represent the faith and ritual of the people as expressed by themselves, an utterance out of that dead past which is almost like a living voice.

IN WHAT SENSE A "SACRED" LITERATURE.

In fact, when we come to analyze what is meant by the term "sacred" as applied to these old literatures, and trace its special meaning in the several cases, we find much the same reasons for discrimination in the religions named by Max Mueller as in the religion of ancient Egypt. In its application to our own Scriptures, the term implies the idea of a divine revelation. We mean by "sacred books," in this application, inspired books, books having divine authority. If we take, next, the Koran of Mohammed, and speak of it in reference to its own claim, we shall mean by the term "sacred" what we mean in applying the same word to our own Bible. We shall mean a book, accepted by those holding the religion it teaches as of supernatural origin, as having, in all it teaches, and all it enjoins, divine authority. The Moslem views his Koran thus, quite as much as the Christian does his Bible. When he declares in his comprehensive article of faith, "There is one God," he adds, "And Mohammed is the prophet of God," and the one of these is as certain and as sacred to him as the other. In its contents, too, the Koran deals wholly with religion, or if with any thing secular, treats it at the strictly religious point of view.

But now, take a collection of books which we find quite at the other extreme—the Kings of Confucius.

There are four of these which I shall notice,—the Shuh King, the Yi King, the Shih King, the Hsiao King. This word, King, is of course not our English word, but a Chinese word, which appears to combine in its meaning two ideas, designating thus what we mean by the word "classic" when applied to some ancient writing, and also what we mean by "canonical." They are called the Kings of Confucius, yet were not written by him, at least more than in very small part; but are a collection of ancient writings made under his direction, and partly by himself. Some portions of them contest the palm of antiquity with the oldest books of Egypt, one writer using the expression "the oldest book of the oldest nation" in application to the Shih King, while another writer speaks in precisely the same way of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead." The Shuh King is to a considerable extent historical, and much is learned from it, partly by way of judicious inference, as to the earliest annals of China, going back, so some tell us, four or five thousand years.

Now, in reading these four Kings, these sacred books of the Chinese, one might be puzzled at first to see in what sense some of them are "sacred," or even religious at all. The Shuh King is, as I said, mainly historical, there is hardly a religious allusion in it, from first to last. The Yi King is a collection of directions to be followed in divination. It is sometimes called "The Mysterious Book." No proper idea of it can be given in a few sentences. It represents the ideas of the Chinese, in ancient times at all events, as to methods by which the future may be foreseen, at least so far as to determine what course of action, in certain cases, will be fortunate, and what not. The methods followed are complicated and mysterious, consisting mainly in the manipulation of certain diagrams. This is the only sense in which it can be called religious, or "sacred." The key to the Hsiao King is furnished in a saying of Confucius to one of his disciples, with which the book opens: "Filial piety is the root of all virtue, and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching. . . . It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of the character." In the form in which we have it, the book dates from the eighth century of our era, although in absolute origin it is much older. It would be called, in a literature like our own, a treatise upon filial piety. It is religious only so far as here and there an allusion to filial piety occurs as a principle planted in man's nature by Heaven, or by God, as some translators think we ought to understand the Chinese word. Much of its teaching is excellent, although there is a strain of exaggeration running all through, which suggests the source of that peculiar characteristic of Chinese religion, the worship of ancestors.

Of the four, the Shih King is the only one which can, in any proper sense of the word, be termed religious. It is a collection of sacrificial odes, the most recent in date belonging to the seventh century B. C., and the oldest—these, however, being very few—dating back to or beyond the eighteenth century B. C. The sacrifices so celebrated are sometimes offered to deceased kings, sometimes they are offerings of thanksgiving for a plentiful year; sometimes the odes are recited at a sacrifice offered by the reigning king to his deceased father, sometimes to all former members of the dynasty in a body; sometimes the ode takes the form of a prayer. I will copy a brief one of the latter sort, as being exceptional for the strain in it of something like religion. It is King Khang who prays; his date some centuries before Christ:

"Let me be reverent! Let me be reverent! (The way of) Heaven is evident, And its appointment not easily preserved. Let me not say that is high aloft above me. It ascends and descends about our doings: It daily inspects us

wherever we are [this seems like a recognition of divine omnipresence and omniscience]. I am a little child [an expression of humility], without intelligence to be reverently (attentive to my duties) : But by daily progress and monthly advance, I will learn to hold fast the gleams (of knowledge) till I arrive at bright intelligence. Assist me to bear the burden (of my position), And show me how to display a virtuous conduct."

This ode is, in the strain of it, quite exceptional. Most of those in the collection are in praise of deceased kings, sung in the ancestral temples by reigning members of their dynasty, or where they accompany sacrifices of thanksgiving for plentiful harvests, praising the spirits of the grain, of the sky and of the earth; often describing simply the labor of the husbandman, the shining of his plowshare, the sowing and springing of the grain, then the harvest, when "the gathered crop is piled up solidly, High as a wall, United together like the teeth of a comb; and the hundred houses are open to receive it." Only here and there is any recognition found of any author of all this abundance save the spirits supposed to preside over the various operations of nature.

If we judge by these "sacred books" of the Chinese, we shall say that the Chinese are really the least religious people of whom we have any knowledge whatever. That, however, might be a hasty inference. Without offering to decide the point now, I will simply say, as what belongs to the present subject, that their "sacred books" are sacred mainly in the sense of being held in great reverence, and as including, for their chief feature, those teachings of the great Confucius which have so profoundly influenced the whole history of the nation since his time.

The sacred literature of other of the pagan religions named above is, in some respects, better entitled to the term "sacred," than the one just noticed. A very high estimate in this regard has been placed upon some of them, especially;—so much so that they have even been put forward as deserving to rank with, if not to excel, Christianity itself. Their chief characteristics as sacred literature will best be studied in connection with some questions suggested by the claim thus made in their behalf;—a topic which will receive attention in the next following of these papers.